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ABSTRACT

This learning module, which is part of a three-block series intended to help human service workers develop the skills necessary to solve the problems encountered in their daily contact with elderly clients of different cultural backgrounds, deals with the cultural heritage of Native Canadians. The module begins with a brief introduction and listing of objectives. The first main section describes several aspects of Canadian history that have contributed to cultural changes among Native Canadians. Some of the difficulties and predicaments that the elder Native populations experienced after the arrival of the first European immigrants are examined. The importance of the Native culture for elders of Native origin is stressed in a section dealing with such aspects of custom and tradition as economics, Indian spirituality (religion), Native celebrations, and diet. A list of selected readings and descriptions of 10 pertinent films are appended. (MN)

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BLOCK B
Cultural Gerontology

MODULE B.4
Native Culture

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NATIVE CULTURE

MODULE B.4

The Elderly Service Workers' Training Project wishes to express appreciation of the following individuals who have contributed to the development of the "Native Culture" module.

Ms. Patricia Murphy, Cover Design

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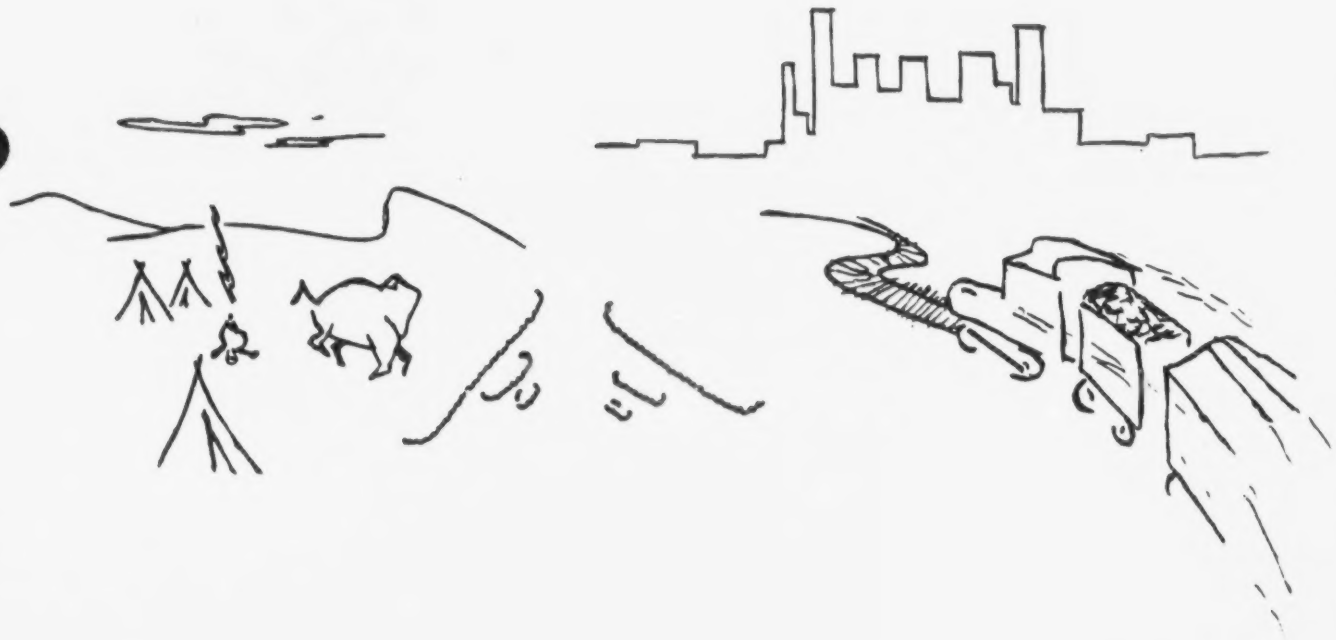
INTRODUCTION

Traditionally all Native (Metis, Status and Non-Status Indians) groups valued the elders for their wisdom and experience. The elders were the repository of their culture and history. In their later years, the elders were taken care of by their extended family.

Today, cultural norms are threatened by the impact of a technological world causing migration to the cities.



The elder's knowledge and wisdom may sometimes be overlooked as other areas of living appear more vital to many young people. Consequently the status of the old people has changed in some ways as families migrate to the cities. In spite of this, the Native elderly continue to live in a large extended family setting regardless of where they live.

The culture of the Native elderly also has been altered by economic shifts, restrictions on hunting and food gathering, trapping and fishing rights and other social changes. There are, however, cultural beliefs that remain which distinguish Native people from the general population. For example, the sharing, communal outlook and their relationship to the environment as opposed to individual, private ownership and overcoming nature and the environment.

This module will present an overview of the history of Native Canadians and the difficulties they experienced after the arrival of the first European immigrants. Several cultural aspects relating to the Native elderly population will be examined as well.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:

(1) describe several aspects of Canadian history that contributed to the cultural changes of the Native people.

(2) describe several of the difficulties and predicaments that the Native elder population experienced after the arrival of the first European immigrants.

(3) describe the importance of the Native culture for elders of Native origin.

The following section will present an overview of the history of the Native peoples in Canada, some historical background, the arrival of the first European immigrants, and their impact on the Native societies.

HISTORY OF THE NATIVES IN CANADA

Upon completion of this section, you will be able to describe several aspects of Canadian history that contributed to the cultural changes of the Native people.

Native societies flourished throughout North America long before the arrival of the Europeans. The societies were as varied in culture and language as were the Europeans.

10,000 B.C. - 1500 A.D.

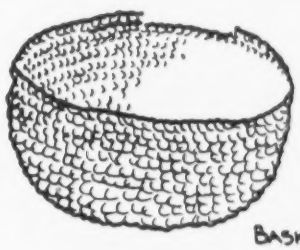
EARLY BIG GAME HUNTER ARTIFACTS

STONE KNIFE

STONE WEAPON TIP

BONE AXE

BONE FISH HOOK



BASKET

The common thread that ran through all the Indian nations was their positive relationship to the land and their sharing and communal concerns. This relationship to the land and their communal concerns are still prevalent and have influenced the social relationship including the extended family living arrangements.

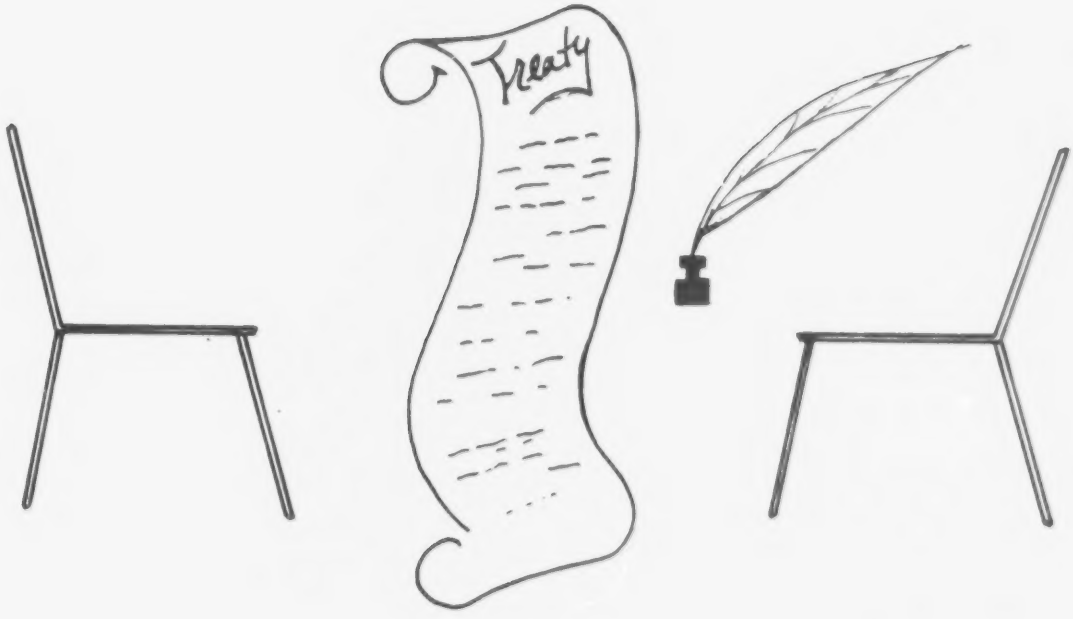
The Native peoples' deep personal commitment to the land was sacred and their survival as a people depended on it. Sharing was also basic to all Indian societies. This concept embraced everything they did and it was strictly adhered to through laws and institutions.

In contrast to this, the European common elements are harnessing (domesticating) and overcoming nature and the environment, in addition to the acquisition of material and personal wealth on an individual basis. Laws have been developed to protect one's personal property and wealth.

The land that the Europeans came to in the early 1400s was not a new world, it was not undiscovered. Civilization already flourished. No one knew for sure how long, but if you ask the Native elders, the answer would be "since time immemorial." One thing is certain, North American civilization did not start in 1492 with Christopher Columbus's appearance.

Because the Native people were the first inhabitants of this land now called Canada, they are the

Aboriginal (first) people. In order for the Canadian government to obtain ownership of Canada, they had to make arrangements with the Indian people in the form of Treaties.



The Indians needed certain necessary services such as medical care, a new kind of education for their children, and economic development. The Canadian government needed land for the settlers who were coming in vast numbers from Europe, so Indian land was

exchanged for the services that the Indians needed. In many cases, the government allotted land to the Native people which later came to be known as reserves. There are still many claims that are outstanding in the settlement of land between the Native people and the government.

In order to ensure the preservation of their economic system, the Native people also negotiated to retain their traditional hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering rights. Gathering means berry picking and storing for the winter's food supply. Therefore, every treaty that was signed by the Indian nations has provided for this ongoing activity.

Hunting, trapping and fishing are not sports to Native people, they are the means by which many of them provide food and supplement their family income. The skins of the animals, which

were once used for clothing, are today sold as an additional source of income. Laws which have curtailed their hunting and fishing rights are of concern to the elderly.

In short, the culture of the Native elderly has been changed dramatically since European contact. Today the Native people have incorporated much of the European lifestyle. However, there are still cultural differences that distinguish them from the general population.

The following section will present several of the difficulties and predicaments that the Native elder population experienced after the arrival of the first European immigrants.

DIFFICULTIES AND PREDICAMENTS EXPERIENCED

Upon completion of this section, you will be able to describe several of the difficulties and predicaments that the Native elder population experienced after the arrival of the first European immigrants.

The Native elderly express their culture through their languages. In fact, many Native people speak several different languages. In Manitoba, the Native languages are Cree, Ojibway, Chippewyan or Dene, Dakota, the Island Lake Dialect (similar to Cree) and Michief (French).

Many of this generation of Native elderly attended Indian boarding schools whose infamous assimilation policies attempted to systematically break down their culture. These schools did not foster pride in Native ways, nor did they encourage the Native to maintain valuable aspects of their culture. The production of material objects, the religion and even the languages were denied. Regretably, much of their skill in parenting, languages and making traditional crafts was lost and so were many aspects of their religion. However, the broad social networks, the living arrangements and the languages have kept the Native culture alive.

Native people are divided into legal categories. Indians who had intermarried with the Europeans are known as the Metis and have acquired the knowledge and practices of both cultures. They are mainly bilingual, speaking both an Indian and a European language. Some of the Metis lived off the land; hunted, trapped, fished and identified themselves with the Indians. Because of this, they can claim Aboriginal Rights from their Indian heritage. Like the Indian, the Metis are still awaiting the resolution of their land settlements.

There are some elderly people who are classified as Non-status Indians because their parents were away hunting or on a trapline during the Prairie Treaty

signing period. Note that some groups such as Sioux Valley never signed a treaty. These descendants nevertheless are Indians and sometimes speak a Native language in spite of the fact that they do not claim Treaty status.

As a result of these historical events, we have in Manitoba, a Native population that is of Treaty status, Non-Status and Metis.

Health Condition

The health condition of the Native elderly is not as good as that of the general population and life expectancy is usually shorter. Factors relating to this are poor nutrition, inadequate medical care, disease and neglect. In spite of these conditions they do not utilize health and social services to any great extent. Part of the reason is that these services are culturally inappropriate and a language problem exists between the Native elders and the human service workers.

All in all, the Native elderly have experienced many social, cultural and health difficulties since European contact. In spite of these negative impacts, the Native people have to an extent, integrated into Canadian society and are a testimony to the fact that Native culture is alive and active.

The following section will present the importance of the Native culture for elders of Native origin.

NATIVE CUSTOMS AND TRADITION

Upon completion of this section, you will be able to describe the importance of the Native culture for elders of Native origin.

Economics

Today's elders have a remarkable knowledge of their natural surroundings due to the fact that their lifestyle demanded constant attention to their environment and weather patterns in order for them to survive. They knew about the land and its ability to sustain itself. They also knew what would and would not grow in a particular area. The Native elders were well acquainted with the rivers, lakes and streams, and where the rapids and dangerous crossings were. They took no chances with their lives and followed only safe routes. They would never travel under stormy conditions except in an emergency.

Industriousness was their watchword. Both men and women often walked great distances to their traplines or travelled by boat to their fishing, trapping or hunting areas. This activity enabled them to remain agile and healthy. The women of course, worked side by side

gathering with their men. They raised their children in this environment and they worked as hard as the men did.

The elders also worked as labourers, farmers, and at other jobs when it became necessary to supplement their family's income, thus incorporating the white peoples' economic structure into their lifestyle. Most Native elderly preferred the traditional way of life, but they managed both with remarkable ease as is still the case today. For instance, men would work from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., but would also fish after work.

Indian Spirituality (Religion)

Native spiritual ceremonies are generally held to pray for a particular event, such as in thanksgiving of particular happy events, naming ceremonies, Sun Dance and seasonal changes.

However, they can also be held to pray for a sick person's recovery or a happy event like a marriage. The Christian religion diverted the Native people from their holistic view of nature; that people and nature are interrelated and that their influence on each other is a dynamic, on-going process. In spite of the

negative interruptions that diverted their spiritual beliefs they remain a very moral people. The Native elderly talk about the rightness and wrongness in living one's every day life. This rightness and wrongness includes respect for all living things, love of children and concern for their upbringing. Rightness also dictates that human beings should not condemn other people for their behaviour without trying to understand them and their own ways of living. Not all Native elders practice the Indian religion, most follow Christianity. Those who follow Christianity want to attend services on Sundays and generally like to go with family if possible.

Indian religion was outlawed during the 1800-1900s and has just recently been revived in many parts of the country. It is a

tradition passed from generation to generation. Since they have not been recorded to a large extent, it is not possible to list and describe many of the traditional holidays and ceremonies in the way one would a Christian event. Those Native elderly people who practice Indian spirituality will appreciate being able to attend the ceremonies. They know when they take place and will communicate this to the worker if the lines are open and positive. Generally the family go together, so someone is likely to pick up the elderly.

Native Celebrations

Native people do not need a reason to have get-togethers. Families and friends are generally found having tea and swapping information on the latest community news or the latest family happening. Summer usually brings large gatherings to Indian Day celebrations or pow-wows. These are times when everyone celebrates together.

Diet

The traditional Native diet consists of a high protein content; fish, moose, elk, deer, duck, geese, herbs, wild berries such as gooseberries, blueberries, saskatoons, choke cheries wild plums and strawberries.

The Native people are great tea drinkers and often prefer tea to coffee. They have tea breaks rather than coffee breaks. They also love to bake bannock, which is similar to baking powder biscuits. Bannock is a staple part of their diet, just as rice is to the Chinese. An effort on the part of the caregiver, be it family, or staff at an institution, to provide traditional foods on special days, such as Christmas and New Year's, would be well appreciated by the Native elder. To facilitate this, there are cookbooks available that will instruct the inquisitive but responsive cook to the Native elderly diet.

In brief, knowledge of the land was crucial to the Native elderly who lived off the land. The interconnection of all living things is evident in their outlook on life, including their religion, which is sometimes referred to as Indian spirituality. Not all Native elderly are Christians but even those who follow the Indian spirituality incorporate some Christian ways.

SUMMARY

Times have changed the life patterns of the Native elderly. Laws have been passed that prevent them from hunting except in certain designated areas. Age and ill health have slowed them down and they are not able to live the life that allowed them freedom and the ability to express their individuality.

Today with the impact of modern society and the migration into cities, the Native culture is being increasingly threatened. The knowledge and wisdom of the Native elderly may sometimes be overlooked as other areas of living appear to be more vital to many young people. Consequently, the status of the Native elder has changed in some ways as families migrate to the city or large towns.

With rare exceptions, the Native elders do not wish to leave their homes. However, the high rate of chronic diseases among the Native elderly population warrants more than just home care for a significant number who experience multiple health problems. When placed in nursing homes away from their communities, and when the human service workers are non-Native and do not speak a Native language, the Native elderly experience severe mental anguish, especially if they are placed in a non-Native nursing home. They undergo more than the usual

amount of culture shock in adapting to an institutional setting and the changed diet.

Religion to the Native elders is important. Some practice Indian spirituality while many have adopted Christianity. Whatever religion the Native elders practice, it is essential to respect their choice. See the Communication and Adjustment Modules for the Native culture for more information regarding health problems and Native elders.

APPENDIX

Selected Readings

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Additional Resources

Place: National Film Board of Canada
245 Main St.
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 1A7

Augusta

This film is the portrait of an 88-year-old Indian woman who lives alone in a log cabin without running water or electricity. She recalls past times, but lives very much in the present. Self-sufficient, dedicated to her people, she spreads warmth wherever she moves with her songs, her harmonica and her soft-voiced comments. (Award:San Francisco).

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16 minutes:33 seconds 106C 0176 178

The People Of This Land

This is a report on the situation of Canada's Native people "south of the 60^{0}," in which economic development of the North, land claims, and social and cultural problems of the Inuit, Indians and Metis are discussed with government officials and Native representatives. Host Barbara Frum also looks at the vast land claims made by Native people in the North; the Inuit, Cree and Dene are determined to get a better political deal than the treaties negotiated with Natives in the South. Produced by CBC.

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86 minutes:20 seconds 106C 0178 432

People Of The Sacred Circle

At the Indian Ecumenical Conference in the summer of 1975, signs of discontent emerged:the young demanded changes;the old resisted contemporary pressures;the presence of white film crews drew dark, resentful glances; and the rain fell and fell - an omen, some said, from the disapproving gods. The resulting program looks not only at the special events of this yearly week-long study session, but at the internal problems of preserving something called "Indianness."

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27 minutes:50 seconds 106C 0176 157

Place: National Film Board Of Canada Cont'd

The Longhouse People (La Grande Maison)

The life and religion of the Longhouse People. We see how the Iroquois of today still maintains a link with a proud past. The film, produced in 1951, shows a rain dance, a healing ceremony and a celebration in honor of a newly chosen chief. (Award:Canadian Film Award.) Produced with cooperation of Canadian Six Nations Iroquois Indians and National Museums of Canada.

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23 minutes:2 seconds 106C 0151 012

Mother of Many Children (Mere de tant d'enfants)

This film is an album of Native womanhood, portraying a once proud matriarchal society which for centuries has been pressured to adopt different standards and customs, but which is now fighting for equal status and opportunity. (Awards:San Fransisco;Dieppe.) Produced by NFB in collaboration with Indian and Northern Affairs, Secretary of State.

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57 minutes:50 seconds 106C 0177 518

The Land Is the Culture

Produced by the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, **The Land Is the Culture** tells of lands stripped from the Indians, of roads and railways driven through reserves without consultation, and of hunting and fishing conflicts - all of which documents the fact that the Indians' struggle for land claims is not just one of geography or recompense in dollars, but of cultural survival. Available in the Pacific Region only. For purchase, contact Pacific Cinematheque Pacifique.

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30 minutes: 106C 0176 313

Place: National Film Board Of Canada Cont'd

The Great Spirit

Many of the nearly 300 000 registered Canadian Indians are finding a new sense of solidarity in their traditional beliefs. This film presents a rare glimpse of Canada's Native peoples' sacred places, rituals, and ceremonies, as they re-discover their ancient religious heritage and renew their sense of Indian identity. Produced by CBC.

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27 minutes:50 seconds 106C 0178 387

Circle of the Sun (Le Soleil perdu)

At the 1961 gathering of the Blood Indians of Alberta the exciting spectacle of the Sun Dance was captured on film for the first time. The film also reflects the predicament of the young generation - those who relinquished their ties with their own people but have not yet found a firm place in a changing world. (Eight awards, including London;Brussels;Toronto.)

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29 minutes:13 seconds 106C 0161 035

Cree Way

John Murdoch, principal of the Indian Affairs school at Rupert House, James Bay, and his wife Gerti have initiated a curriculum development project using local people and resources. The teaching materials are drawn from Cree folklore, are mainly in Cree and make use of old photographs, artefacts and books that are written and printed in the community. The school year is organized so that pupils have time to go hunting and fishing with their families. This innovative approach makes local control of education a reality in Native communities.

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26 minutes:18 seconds 106C 0177 155

Place: National Film Board Of Canada Cont'd

Nonoonse Anishinabe Ishichekewin Ka Kanawentank

Each spring, for more than 40 years, 68-year-old Nonoonse has crossed Lake Manitoba's fragile ice to tap the delicate maples on Sugar Island. She always brings along some members of her large extended family so grandchildren and great-grandchildren too can learn, and thereby help to keep alive, the Saulteaux traditions of their ancestors.

This quiet and reflective film with a soundtrack that features natural sounds, comments by Nonoonse, and minimal voice-over narration, presents a clear picture of the sugaring process but, more important, suggests how traditions function as the "cement" that keeps a culture together. The role of women in preserving and transmitting such traditions is also touched upon in two other films about Native women, **Augusta** and **Mother of Many Children.**

---

10 minutes:17 seconds 106C 0680 054

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The Elderly Service Workers' Training Project wishes to express appreciation of the following individuals whose knowledge and expertise in the aging sector has contributed to the overall effort of the Project.

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ELDERLY SERVICE WORKERS' TRAINING PROJECT (ESWTP)

TITLES OF THE TRAINING PROJECT'S MODULES

Block A: Basic Knowledge of Aging Process

A.1 Program Planning for Older Adults **
A.2 Stereotypes of Aging **
A.3 Human Development Aspects of Aging **
A.4 Social Aspects of Aging **
A.5 Physiological Aspects of Aging **
A.6 Death and Bereavement **
A.7 Psychological Aspects of Aging **
A.8 Confusion and the Older Adult **
A.9 Nutrition and the Older Adult **
A.10 Listening and the Older Adult **

Block B: Cultural Gerontology

B.1 Ukrainian Culture **
B.1.1 Communication and Adjustment *
B.1.2 Communication and Adjustment *

B.2 German Culture **
B.2.1 Communication and Adjustment *

B.3 French Culture *
B.3.1 Communication and Adjustment *

B.4 Native Culture *
B.4.1 Communication and Adjustment *
B.4.2 Communication and Adjustment *

Block C: Work Environment

C.1 Work Environment I *

Resource Materials:

Handbook of Selected Case Studies
User's Guide
ESWTP Authoring System
ESWTP Final Report

Please Note:

ALL MODULES ARE AVAILABLE IN THE PRINT FORMAT. THE CODE FOR IDENTIFYING OTHER FORMATS IS LISTED BELOW.

Code	Format
*	Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI) Courseware
**	Interactive Video (Tape)/Computer-Assisted Television Courseware